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primarily within his mother's household, but also, and especially immediately after weaning, in his grandmother's household. His needs for food and warmth could in fact be met in any of the households which formed part of his father's house and family group. There was no greater contrast for the small boy about the age of seven between this kind of life in the women's compound and his plunge into the life of the boys' dormitory.

*The father's role with young children*

During day-time in Ngoni villages Ngoni men and women lived almost in two separate worlds, the women in their compounds, the men by the kraal gate or about the village. When important visitors arrived the veranda of the 'big house' became a general meeting-place. Chiefs and leading men who had acquired chairs, among other modern household furniture, preferred to entertain their guests on their own veranda where they had some degree of privacy, and to offer them chairs to sit on instead of the kraal fence to lean against. This use of chairs which they found more comfortable to sit on brought many of the fathers of families back to their own verandas now and then during the day, though they continued to eat their meals with the other men at the kraal gate, and to go there to discuss village affairs and watch over the coming and going of the cattle.

This change of habit brought the fathers of families into closer touch with their young children, and it was accelerated by the growing Christian tradition in which fathers were more closely associated with certain aspects of their children's upbringing. It was the father who arranged for the baptism of the children which took place in the local church and was a ceremony attended by most of the village, whether Christians or not. When an evangelist or a school-teacher conducted evening prayers, as they often did near the kraal where anyone could come after the evening meal, Christian fathers sometimes carried a child in their arms to the prayers.

siderable latent, and at times overt, antagonism from the younger towards the older group. This was to some extent mitigated by the dominant interest as well as occupation in cattle-herding. The head herd-boys were people of importance, called in for consultations with the adults who were cattle-owners. They assisted at the killing of beasts and went with them to market when beasts were sold. These older boys, despite their dominance, were heroes to the younger ones, and basked in an aura of hero-worship. They took good care to build up their claims to be thought of as 'big ones', with proven feats of strength, vaunted knowledge about cattle, skill in leading dances, and reputations as lady-killers.

The younger boys found some outlet for their aggressive impulses in the stick fighting, which was a recognized sport. They fought with 'rods', like single-sticks, and became adept at attack and defence. It was alleged that in the old days there was no redress for broken heads or bruises. As the elders said: 'They were learning to fight when young. There was no man ignorant of this learning. This school for fighting made strength in the body.' The clash of sticks could be heard out on the grazing grounds by day or in the evening on the edge of the village when the cattle were safely in the kraal. Skill in stick-fighting was one of the ways in which leadership among the younger boys was acknowledged. It was a knock-out championship, hotly contested, until everyone agreed: 'That one—he has excelled.' Boys going to school took their sticks and knobkerries with them in case they were challenged on the path, but they were careful to hide them in the bushes just before arriving at the school.

### *Boys' life in the village*

When the boys went to live in the dormitory they did not only escape from the women's world into a boys' circle. They entered the fringe of the men's world and provided they conducted themselves with propriety they could sit on the edge of the men's group at the kraal gate and listen to talk about men's affairs.

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521 867 men's affairs. The kind of topics discussed by men at the kraal gate included hunting, in the right season; cases heard in the courts and the application of Ngoni law to all subjects of the Ngoni chiefs; the organization of village affairs from tax collecting and dealing with tax evaders to beer drinks and burials and building houses; the sales of cotton, tobacco and cattle at near-by markets and the current prices; the various labour recruiters combing the villages for likely young men and the latest stories brought back by men who had returned from working in the south. Every now and then, particularly when the talk ranged round decisions in the courts or adding to the herds of cattle, references were made to the Ngoni past, to their relations with Europeans, both missionaries and officials, and to the behaviour of the non-Ngoni groups in the Ngoni kingdoms. The older boys listened attentively and as we shall see later in Chapter VII acquired among other things an extensive knowledge about the needs and uses of cattle. The younger ones pricked up their ears now and then when a familiar name or event was mentioned, and stored up questions to ask their father at a time when he was willing to listen and answer.

576 417 There was the usual Ngoni formality about where people sat at the kraal gate. The most senior men sat on each side of the opening, leaning up against the gate-posts, with the rest in decreasing order of rank as they were farther from the gate. The cleared space on each side of the gate and in front of it was all known as the 'gate of the kraal'. The craftsmen [468] who were carving wood or twisting bark rope, making baskets or plaiting mats, sat according to their age and rank on the edges of the senior group or among them. They could have carried on their trade anywhere, but they preferred the company of their fellows and did not want to miss listening to the talk or the arrival of strangers. The herd-boys, when 858 they were present, were on the extreme edges of those sitting [561] there, divided into two groups, 'youths' and boys. Each [262] group made its own fire for boiling milk and roasting sweet potatoes or ground-nuts 596

224 After the hunt the tally of kills was reckoned up, the game was carried home by the young men, and on the return to [262] the villages the meat was cooked and eaten by the men at the kraal gate. This was the occasion for going over all [521] the episodes of the chase, the skill of So-and-so, the fine organizing of the hunt by its 'owner'. No one mentioned the misses, no one's feelings were hurt, and there was a warm feeling of united and contented sharing in a good day's sport.

Lion-hunting was organized differently. Only former warriors and well-known huntsmen were called, and they sometimes took their sons with them as carriers. Guns as well as spears were taken, though the Ngoni liked to say, and it was often true, that they killed lions with spears only. Tracking a lion was dangerous and difficult, and when it was located in a patch of tall grass or reeds, the huntsmen made a circle round it, ready to attack when it broke cover. As in the chase, the one who stabbed the lion first, second and finally was noted. The dead lion was hoisted on poles slung from the shoulders of young men, and carried to the village where the hunt was organized. Here the party was welcomed and given food, the heroes were acclaimed, and the headman and seniors led the way to the village of the clan head, who called his men together to rejoice. When the augmented party reached the chief's or Paramount's village, [535] where all lions had to be taken, a war-dance took place in [555] the kraal, as of warriors returning from a campaign. The killer of the lion came out in front of the rest and danced his individual war-dance; he was hailed as a hero and new [273] epithets were added to his praise names. The whole party [574] was given beer, a beast was killed for a meat feast, and then the party thanked the Paramount in traditional fashion and went home.

It was in lion-hunting that young adults who were taken along felt the spice of danger, the thrill of success, and witnessed the pride of recognition for the successful killer by the Paramount and all 196 the Ngoni leaders.